

Test on second Davids sample suspended

AFP, Turin

The analysis on the second urine sample of Juventus and Holland midfielder Edgar Davids, whose first sample showed a positive test for nandrolone, will not take place on Tuesday as planned, the Italian First Division club announced Monday evening.

The suspension of the test was decided by Rome's civil tribunal and revealed Monday evening by Juventus president Vittorio Chiucano.

"The competent authority has in a hearing this morning (Monday) listened to the appeal of the player, nominating an expert in pharmacology from Rome's La Sapienza University (to defend him), suspending (therefore) the execution of the operation of a revised analysis which had been planned for tomorrow morning at 08:30am," said the club in a statement.

Juventus added that they fully supported the player's denial of any wrongdoing.

Football tragedy Iranian police begin with arrests

AFP, Tehran

Iranian police have arrested a number of people following the collapse of a football stadium in the northern city of Sanj which has left two people dead and close to 300 others injured, a press report said Tuesday.

Quoted by the pro-reform *Norouz* daily, Morteza Talai, police chief in Mazandaran province, said officers began arresting a number of people Sunday, soon after a needle match between two top Iranian teams turned to tragedy.

Talai, who did not specify how many people had been taken in since the accident, said the arrested people only appeared to be spectators, but gave no more details. He said further arrests are expected to be made soon.

Local hospital officials as well as state media confirmed that two people were dead after a stand at Mottagi stadium in Sari, jam-packed with some 30,000 spectators but built to hold only half that many, fell apart during the match on Sunday.

State radio quoted officials as saying that another five people were in serious condition from the tragedy, which left 287 people injured according to officials.

Pirouzi, a perennial league leader with an enthusiastic nationwide following, were losing 2-0 at half-time to local First Division competitors Shamshehak in a do-or-die elimination cup match at the grounds.

President Mohammad Khatami has asked officials to launch an immediate investigation into the incident, state radio said.

Petit more relaxed now

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona's French World Cup and Euro 2000 winning midfielder Emmanuel Petit said Monday that he was happier with the Catalan side since the arrival of new coach Carles Rexach.

"I like Rexach a lot," said Petit, who was relegated to the bench for most of the season under outgoing coach Lorenzo Serra Ferrer.

"We've had discussions twice in two days, which means that I've talked with him more in two days than Serra Ferrer in eight months," Petit said on his internet site.

The French player has been linked with a move to English Premiership under-achievers Chelsea this summer, after the former Arsenal player has failed to hold down a regular first team place at the Nou Camp.

Petit was brought on as a substitute in the 24th minute for injured Brazilian playmaker Rivaldo during last Saturday's 0-0 draw against Espanyol.

But with two draws in two weeks Rexach has failed to revive the fortunes of Barca, who are struggling in fifth position in the league.

Djoric sacked as Yugoslav coach

AFP, Belgrade

Yugoslav national football coach Milovan Djoric has been sacked by the Yugoslav Football Federation (FSJ), the Tanjug news agency reported Monday.

Djoric paid the price for a series of poor results during qualifiers for the 2002 World Cup, notably their 1-0 home defeat at the end of last month to Russia.



Real Madrid superstar Luis Figo in a light mood during a news conference in Munich on May 8.

Bowyer blow for Leeds

AFP, Paris

Leeds will miss Lee Bowyer for their Champions League semi-final second-leg clash with Valencia on Tuesday, after UEFA hit him with a three-match suspension Monday for a stamping incident during last Wednesday's goalless first leg at Elland Road.

A disciplinary commission of European soccer's governing body announced the decision Monday and although Leeds can appeal against the ban Bowyer will not be eligible to play in Tuesday's game.

If Leeds do beat Valencia at the Mestalla stadium, Bowyer also looks set to miss the final unless an appeal against the ban is lodged by Thursday and proves successful.

The 24-year-old midfielder has six goals to his credit during this season's Champions League competition.

But he now looks unlikely to get the opportunity to add to that tally following his altercation with Valencia midfielder Juan Sanchez in Tuesday's first leg at Elland Road.

The two players tangled by the touchline and Bowyer was then seen to kick his opponent in the shoulder, before stamping on his chest.

Referee Pierluigi Collina took no action at the time, but Bowyer has now been punished for the incident following a review of video evidence.

A UEFA statement said: "Based on the video footage of the match, the Control and Disciplinary Body decided to suspend Lee Bowyer for three UEFA club competition matches for his assault committed against Juan Sanchez.

"The evidence at hand clearly proved that the Leeds player deliberately stamped on his opponent."

Frank de Boer tests positive

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Frank de Boer, captain of the Dutch national team and his country's most capped international, tested positive for the banned substance nandrolone after a UEFA Cup quarter-final against Celta Vigo on March 15.

But the 30-year-old Barcelona defender, who has made 89 appearances for his country, protested his innocence on his official website [icons.com](http://www.icons.com).

"As you may have heard, I've recently tested positive after an initial test for nandrolone," said De Boer, in his third season with Barcelona after joining them from Ajax Amsterdam.

"I want to say this: I'm a professional athlete and I'd never knowingly use any illegal or banned drug under any circumstances. Let's be quite clear on that." The player, who won the European Cup with Ajax in 1995, said he had a "totally clear conscience".

"I would put my hand in the fire to swear my innocence because I have never taken that substance," De Boer told a news conference.

"I am very surprised by the result because I know I am completely innocent."

"I had a doping test after the Celta Vigo match in the return leg of the UEFA Cup on March 15," De Boer said. "And afterwards I was informed that I gave a positive result."

"I produced a result of 8.6 (milligrams per litre of blood) on the test when the limit is two. I am not worried, though, because I have a totally clear conscience and I am now waiting for the second

test."

Barcelona said they would not make any official declaration on the case until the results of an obligatory second test were known.

But Bouweijen Zenden, one of De Boer's Dutch team mates at Barcelona, said he had "complete confidence" in the defender's innocence.

"I am extremely surprised because he is a person who has never taken anything strange. I would like to know what the real cause of his innocence is," said De Boer.

"I never use and will never use any type of drug or banned steroids but I can't check all my foods and drinks. Even though I'm always very conscientious about what I eat and drink, it's impossible to check everything."

"I know that one's own body can produce a certain amount of nandrolone but I don't know if that's what happened here. Basically, I don't know how it came into my bloodstream."

De Boer said he had been informed of the test result by club doctors after Barcelona's league game against Espanyol on Saturday.

"I was told after the Espanyol match and I thought it was a joke, but unfortunately it wasn't. Now I am going to look for a way of resolving the matter," he added, on his website, that he hoped the matter would be resolved quickly.

"There will be a second test very soon and I sincerely hope that will clear the whole matter up and prove my innocence. This has been very upsetting for me but I'm determined to show that I've done nothing wrong."



Bayern Munich manager Ottmar Hitzfeld speaks at a press conference yesterday ahead of their Champions' League semifinal encounter against Real Madrid.

Iker Casillas.

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And judging by last week's virtuoso defensive display by Bayern that caused their opponents to flee the pitch without shaking hands, it would seem that Real will need, as Raul says, to do something very special.

Bayern forward Alexander Zickler is hoping for a repeat of his performance last year when he scored their two second leg goals.

"No-one likes losing these big games. I just hope I can do what I did last year," added the 26-year-old Zickler.

The Real-Bayern pairing is becoming something of a classic

Michael Larnat in the 1-0 weekend Bundesliga win over Leverkusen which kept them level on points at the top with Schalke 04 with two games to go.

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psions League goals for the Bavarians this year, is coach Ottmar Hitzfeld's main doubt.

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"I'm very, very doubtful for the match, I'm worried sick," said the attacking midfielder who has a ligament and ankle problem.

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